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News and Views

from the Farm Management Staff

PRINCIPLES AND
FACTS



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FEDERAL EXTENSION SERVICE
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Dear Farm Management Extension Workers:

A Glance Behind -- The Challenge Ahead

At the close of the old year it is fitting to muse a bit about some of the events of the past and to study carefully some of the needs and opportunities that lie ahead. A subcommittee of Extension's Organization and Policy Committee has provided us with an outline of some of the needs and opportunities. Their report will soon be published. As a background to discussing them, we will muse a bit about the past year.

There are many highlights:

(1) Farm management workers performed a much appreciated service and accomplished much basic education in helping farmers to forecast the likely results of various degrees of farm program participation.

(2) In visiting county agents in several States it seemed to us that they were seeing more clearly the need for farm records as a tool.

(3) Some excellent educational materials were prepared and used widely in the field of farm finance -- both with lenders and with farmers.

(4) The good work was continued in social security and income tax education, with some trend toward emphasizing the implications for management.

(5) A growing realization that area and aggregate analyses are necessary steps in the decision making process seems to be occurring.

(6) However, from where we sit, probably the most important trend in farm management extension work in the past year has been the increase in management training given county agents. This has probably resulted from (a) the greater recognition of the increasing importance of management to farm families as they strive to attain a higher level of living in agriculture, and (b) the increased realization that county agents need further training in management before they are able to be fully helpful to families on their management problems.

As evidence that this trend is occurring, we can recall 18 States that had organized management training activities during the past year. These took the form of formal courses for graduate credit, training courses at the college and in the

counties, 2-day workshops, organized arrangements for farm management men to ride with agents in counties, special emphasis at annual conferences, etc.

The farm management field is a broad one and the needs far exceed available manpower in most States. This creates a situation where constant evaluation of the importance of activities is essential. It would seem that even in such a competitive situation the training of agents to do farm management work with individual families must remain high on the priority list. For helping farm families to make the most appropriate adjustments in the light of resources and their values is a growing need.

A tentative subcommittee report of Extension's Committee on Organization and Policy lists nine "major areas of program emphasis which should be receiving high priority attention by the Extension Service." It is called the "Scope" report. Several of the nine areas involve farm management. Under the area of emphasis, entitled "Management on the Farm and in the Home," the subcommittee has this to say:

"Management on the Farm and in the Home.--A major strength of American agriculture lies in the fact that it is predominately a family-farm type of operation. Each family is free to make its own plans, arrive at its own decisions, and exercise its ingenuity to the fullest. This puts a premium on the ability of the individual family to make wise management decisions. This premium on management ability is becoming even more obvious as agriculture grows more complex, specialized, and interdependent with other economic sectors. It is further emphasized by the fact that on our farms the challenges associated with the efficient management of the farm and the home are inseparable. Frequent decisions must be made with respect to competition between the farm and the home for money or time resources.

"Herein lies a major educational challenge to the Extension Service. That is to provide those educational experiences for farm families which will enable them better to: (1) Appraise all their resources, (2) identify problems to be overcome, (3) analyze different ways to meet these problems, (4) weigh alternatives in terms of possible results, (5) understand the technological, credit, and other aids they may use, and (6) choose and follow the most promising courses of action. Through these experiences farm families are able to derive incomes and greater satisfactions from their respective opportunities.

"This is the course of action being intensified in the "unit approach" to farm families' problems. Excellent progress is being made in these more intensive educational efforts, but even more effort on a continuing basis is mandatory."

Herein lies a challenge to farm management workers to carry out their role in developing the techniques and in training agents so that the management assistance envisioned by the subcommittee can be fully accomplished by Extension in the near future.

Fulfilling this need calls for both well-developed training materials and the availability of time to do the job. It also calls for administrative and supervisory arrangements. Experience has indicated that the 2- or 3-day workshop, although helpful, is not adequate. A training course is far superior. This was indicated by the fact that in one State, agents requested a longer, more penetrating course, after having the brief workshop. Too, agents who have not worked much

in this area will feel competent to help on management problems much faster if they have some in-the-county assistance. The training for this work must proceed far enough that the agent feels sure of himself in using the management process with farm families. Unlike some training work we do, this is not something where a general knowledge on the part of the agent can suffice.

The accomplishment of the type of management help being intensified in the unit approach demands an organized, continuing training program in management. This is required both by changing personnel and changing problems. Good progress is being made. All four farm management regional committees sponsored by the Farm Foundation are working on county agent training materials. The big challenge is to work out the administrative arrangements and to find the time and techniques that are needed. To accomplish this requires teamwork, imagination, and perseverance.

County Agents' Reports Show Steady Growth in Credit Work

Annual reports for 1956 showed that in 90 percent (2,737) of the counties extension agents had assisted 180,000 families with credit problems. The 1953 report indicated that in 82 percent (2,476) of the counties agents had worked with 132,000. Since 1953 each report has shown both a greater number of counties reporting credit work and a greater number of cases per county. Much of this increased attention has been associated with farm and home development and rural development.

Annual Inventory of USDA Popular Publications

This list of popular publications, which can currently be ordered in quantity without charge, includes the following in our area of work:

<u>Series and Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date of Issue or Revision</u>
F 1614	Business Records for Poultry Keepers	1946
F 1961	Getting Started in Farming	1954
F 1962	Useful Records for Family Farms	1944
F 1965	Planning the Farm for Profit and Stability	1946 SR 1957 SR
F 1966	Part-Time Farming	1953 R
F 2026	Father-Son Operating Agreements	1951
L 307	How Much Fertilizer Shall I Use?	1951
M 720	American Farming -- An Introduction for Young People	1956
PA 275	Farm Family Business	1955

You Should See

Vertical Integration in Agriculture, Purdue University, Agricultural Extension Service, Mimeo EC-154, Oct. 1957. This publication takes up seven basic questions concerning vertical integration in a very concise and readable manner. They are:

(1) Why discuss vertical integration? (2) What is involved in vertical integration? (3) What conditions favor integration? (4) What farm enterprises may be likely candidates for integration? (5) In what parts of the Nation will integration be most likely? (6) Who will do the integrating? (7) What are the probable consequences of integration to farm people?

Industry Financing of Egg Production by Kermit Birth and Fred Hughes, Pennsylvania State University. This mimeograph covers such points as (1) the kinds of contracts being used, (2) why these programs are being initiated, (3) how they may affect the egg industry, and (4) vertical and horizontal integration.

Financing the Production of Broilers in Lower Delaware, Bulletin 332, University of Delaware. This bulletin presents an excellent description of the status of this extremely integrated enterprise in Delaware. It is produced jointly by Delaware and the ARS.

Economics of Cattle Feeding Systems for West Texas, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 880, Sept. 1957. This bulletin reports a study "to assist West Texas farmers to appraise the opportunities for marketing sorghum grain through cattle at a profit." Joint authors are P. T. Marion and C. E. Fisher, superintendents of the substations at Spur and Lubbock, Texas, respectively; A. C. Magee of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology of Texas A and M College; and W. F. Hughes of the Farm Economics Research Division of the Agricultural Research Service of the USDA.

Estimates of additional investment required for a 100-head and a 500-head cattle feeding enterprise are presented. Data on expected gains and expected inputs of feeds and labor under nine systems, are derived from experimental feeding trials. Economic analyses of these input-output data are presented.

The bulletin will be of value not only to growers of grain sorghums in the Southern Great Plains but also to those interested in their competition with other cattle feeders.

Personnel Changes

Guy W. Miller, farm management specialist, has recently announced his retirement from Ohio State University. Guy has made a real contribution to farm management extension work in his contacts with other States, as well as that in his native State of Ohio. He recently returned from a tour of duty in Pakistan.

Burt Burlingame, farm management specialist from California, has just returned from a year abroad where he served on the staff of the European Productivity Agency, which is part of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation. While there he served as consultant on farm management in a number of European countries and among other things prepared a draft of a Handbook on Farm Management, which will be published by the European Productivity Agency.

Sincerely yours,

J. B. Claar

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